POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES - RIVER AND STREAM CORRIDORS

POLICY

It is the policy of the borough and state to protect and enhance the public recreation, habitat and water supply functions of rivers and streams in the Willow Sub-basin. Public access to and use of river and stream corridors will be encouraged.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

1. River and Stream Buffers

   Specific guidelines for use of public lands along the Fish Creek drainage, the Little Susitna River, and Little Willow Creek are listed under the appropriate management unit.

   All rivers and streams with significant recreation value should have a publicly owned wildlife habitat/public recreation buffer surrounding the watercourse. The size of river and stream buffers will be determined on a site specific basis and will vary depending on the particular values of each stream. However, buffers should include a minimum of 50 feet each side of the ordinary high water mark. The buffers should be designed to minimize negative impacts on visual character, habitat value, water quality, noise screening ability, and public access. Therefore buffer design will require coordination and review with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Division of Parks - Department of Natural Resources.

2. Forestry Practices

   Personal use of timber or commercial harvest in river and stream buffers must be consistent with habitat/recreation values. Generally, the Forest Resources and Practices Act and implementing regulations will guide operations along streams. Operations on state lands with the potential of affecting anadromous fish streams require on-site review during preliminary sale planning (including and in addition to Title 16 requirements).

3. Instream Flows

To minimize conflict between water appropriations and fish and wildlife/recreation resources, it is recommended that hydrologic studies be done to provide data necessary to establish instream flow requirements for the following streams and their lateral drainages:

Priority 1

Little Willow Creek - Returning salmon runs exceed 20,000. Angler man-days - 5,000 to 10,000.

Willow Creek - Returning salmon runs exceed 100,000. Angler man-days - 25,000 to 30,000.

Deception Creek - Returning salmon runs exceed 5,000. Closed to salmon fishing to protect spawners.

Lilly Creek (inlet to Nancy Lake) and Lake Creek (outlet of Nancy Lake). Salmon migration for more than 5,000 adult red salmon and rearing area several hundred thousand silver molt. Major juvenile rearing areas for Little Susitna River coho salmon.

Little Susitna River and Tributaries - Returning salmon runs exceed 50,000. Angler man-days - 20,000 to 25,000. Major rearing areas occur in connecting drainages in the area from the Parks Highway crossing downstream to the Burma Road intersection. Notable drainages include Papoose Twin Lakes, Horseshoe Lakes Complex, Finger Lake, Butterfly lakes area and numerous unnamed lake drainages immediately adjacent to the river, most of which fall within the Little Susitna Corridor Management Unit.

Fish Creek (outlet of Big Lake) - Returning salmon runs exceed 40,000. A major expenditure of state funds is proposed for a hatchery further up in the drainage to rebuild the salmon runs.

Meadow Creek (inlet to Big Lake) - Salmon spawning and rearing area. Major salmon hatchery is located on this stream and is dependent on stream flows for its water supply.

Cottonwood Creek - Returning salmon runs exceed 10,000. Angler man-days - 8,000 to 10,000.

Wasilla Creek - Returning salmon runs exceed 5,000. Angler man-days - 5,000 to 7,000.

Spring Creek (tributary of Wasilla Creek) - The major rearing area for Wasilla Creek coho salmon.

Fish Creek (outlet of Red Shirt Lake and inlet to Flat Horn Lake) - 2,000 to 5,000 adult red salmon migrate to Red Shirt Lakes, producing several hundred thousand red salmon rearing smolt; more than 2,000 silver adults spawn throughout the system. This system has high recreational fishing potential when access is developed.

Priority 2

Threemile Creek (Big Lake drainage) - Salmon spawning and rearing area.

Priority 3

Noname Creek (inlet of Nancy Lake) - Salmon rearing area. Located on east side of Nancy Lake.

Lucille Creek (outlet of Lucille Lake) - Salmon rearing area.

Goose Creek (outlet of Stephan Lake) - Salmon spawning and rearing habitat.

4. Hydrologic Monitoring

It is recommended that baseline hydrologic monitoring be conducted (by DGGS or the USGS) in areas where major agricultural disposals are planned. Such areas currently include only the Fish Creek Unit, but may be extended to other areas as borough/ state small farm disposals are located. Monitoring of Fish Creek and its tributaries should begin as soon as possible.

5. Road Crossings

Where road corridors contact streams, appropriate areas should be retained in public ownership to accommodate the expected recreation use, including parking. The size of these areas will vary but should generally be 20-80 acres. Exceptions to this size may be made for sites anticipated to have very low or high use. These river access/recreation sites should be located to be readily accessible from the highway without being visible. Typically, this will require a short section of access road to a parking area screened from the highway by vegetation or topography.